

DIGNITY FOR ALL STUDENTS ACT POLICY

The School District is committed to providing a positive, safe and supportive learning environment where students are free from bullying, harassment and discrimination.

Harassment is the creation of a hostile environment by conduct or by verbal threats, intimidation or abuse that has or would have the effect of unreasonably and substantially interfering with a student's educational performance, opportunities or benefits, or mental, emotional or physical well-being; or conduct, verbal threats, intimidation or abuse that reasonably causes or would reasonably be expected to cause a student to fear for his/her physical safety. The harassing behavior may be based upon an individual's actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sex, sexual orientation, or gender (identity or expression).

Bullying includes systematic and intentional infliction of physical harm or psychological distress on an individual or group of individuals. Bullying can also encompass unwanted purposeful written, verbal, non-verbal, social or relational, or physical behavior (e.g. threatening, insulting or dehumanizing gestures by an adult or student) that has the potential to create long term damage, cause discomfort or humiliation, or unreasonably interfere with the individual's school performance. Bullying is often characterized by an imbalance of power. Unwanted teasing, touching, threatening, intimidating, stalking, cyber-stalking, cyber-bullying, physical violence, theft, sexual, religious, or racial harassment, public humiliation, destruction of school or personal property, social exclusion including incitement and/or coercion, and rumor or spreading of falsehoods are also forms of bullying.

The School District aims to foster an educational setting wherein all students are treated with respect and dignity.

The School District acknowledges that bullying and other forms of harassment or discrimination are disruptive and harmful to our students. Because bullying and other forms of harassment or discrimination are detrimental to our learning environment, our sense of community, and an individual's well being, the School District does not and will not condone bullying, harassment or discrimination of any kind. The School District strictly prohibits all forms of bullying, harassment and discrimination by district employees or students on school property or at school functions, regardless of whether they are conducted on the premises of the School District. The School District also prohibits all forms of off-campus bullying, harassment or discrimination including, but not limited to, "internet" or "cyber-bullying," which may include the use of instant messaging, e-mail, websites, chat rooms and text messaging, or other acts in violation of this policy when such acts create a hostile environment for the victim at school, infringe upon the rights of a victim at school, or materially and substantially disrupt the educational process or the orderly operation of any school in the School District.

DIGNITY FOR ALL STUDENTS ACT POLICY

Any student who believes that he or she is being bullied, harassed or discriminated against, or who has knowledge of bullying, harassing or discriminating behavior must report it. Students must report the bullying, harassment or discrimination to a staff member.

All School District personnel are responsible for taking action if they become aware of any bullying, harassment or discrimination against a student. Staff members must report all complaints of bullying, harassment, and discrimination that they receive from students, as well as any instances of bullying, harassment or discrimination that they are aware of, to the principal of the school where the incident occurred.

Bullying, harassment or discrimination of a sexual nature, as defined by the School District's sexual harassment policy, must be reported to the School District's Title IX officer. Bullying, harassment or discrimination which involves criminal activity, or where there is reasonable belief that criminal activity may occur, must be immediately reported to the Superintendent of Schools and law enforcement. To the extent possible, allegations of bullying, harassment or discrimination will be kept confidential; however, the School District reserves the right to disclose the identity of the parties and witnesses in appropriate circumstances to individuals with a need to know.

All reports of bullying, harassment or discrimination will be fully investigated and action will be taken to address the allegations, including the imposition of appropriate disciplinary measures in accordance with applicable law and the School District's Code of Conduct.

The School District expressly prohibits any retaliation against complainants, victims, witnesses and/or any individuals who initiate, testify, participate or assist in the investigation of any allegation or report of bullying, harassment or discrimination. The School District's administrators will monitor participants in investigations and victims of bullying, harassment or discrimination to ensure that the behavior has ceased, no retaliation has occurred and support or counseling has been afforded to the involved individuals, as needed.

DIGNITY FOR ALL STUDENTS ACT POLICY

The School District will create guidelines for training and will provide training to staff, in accordance with state law and the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education, to raise awareness and sensitivity to acts of bullying, harassment or discrimination, to enable staff to prevent bullying, harassment and discrimination and to provide intervention and reporting.

The School District shall ensure that the course of instruction in grades kindergarten through twelve includes a component on civility, citizenship and character education. Such component shall instruct students on the principles of honesty, tolerance, personal responsibility, respect for others, observance of laws and rules, courtesy, dignity and other traits which will enhance the quality of their experiences in, and contributions to, the community. For purposes of this policy, "tolerance," "respect for others" and "dignity" shall include awareness and sensitivity to discrimination or harassment and civility in the relations of people of different races, weights, national origins, ethnic groups, religions, religious practices, mental or physical abilities, sexual orientations, genders and sexes.

In accordance with state law, the Superintendent of Schools shall ensure that at least one staff member at every school be designated as a Dignity Act Coordinator and be trained to handle human relations in the areas of race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender and sex.

The Superintendent of Schools or his/her designee shall develop and implement procedures and guidelines, as needed, to fulfill the purpose of this policy in the School District, including intervention and non-discriminatory instructional and counseling methods and strategies to increase awareness, sensitivity and support for victims of bullying, harassment and discrimination.

The School District shall report material incidents of discrimination and harassment of students to the Department of Education as mandated by the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education, but in no case less than on an annual basis.

Ref: Education Law, Article 2
Education Law § 801-a

Cross References: Policy 5300, Code of Conduct
Policy 0100, Equal Opportunity

Adoption: August 9, 2012